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Mr. Lyle D. Jaffe, Dockets Management
Federal Drug Administration/DHHS
12420 Parklawn Drive, Rm. #1-23
Rockville, MD 20857

Dear Mr. Jaffe:

Please stop the practice of forced molting in egg production through docket #98P-0203/CP. The methods used are unnatural and highly stressful to the hens.

Molting is part of a hen's natural cycle. After about one year, the hen will lose her old feathers and begin to grow new ones. A natural molt will normally take place over the course of two or three months. During this time the hen will lay very few eggs. The hen's reproductive system is given a rest while energy is used to grow new feathers. Molting would normally occur at a slightly different time and for a slightly different length of time for each bird in a flock. Even among laboratory-engineered hybrids each hen has her own particular rhythm and cycle. Not so with forced molting.

As you well know, when statistics indicate that egg production levels are about to decline, the egg factories inflict a forced molt upon the entire flock. As a result, all the birds lose their feathers and temporarily stop laying eggs at the same time. During this process, up to 25 percent of the hens die. In an industry where millions of hens are involved, the death toll is alarming. Unfortunately, the hen is dispensable. Their tattered, lifeless body is easily replaced.

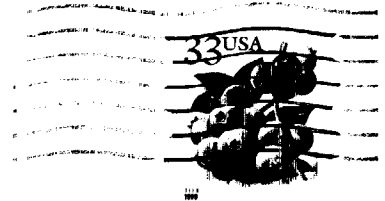
Twelve bright, white eggs are presented in a cardboard container, its cover depicting scenes of happy, healthy hens. Little does the consumer know the price hens' had to pay to deliver those twelve eggs. I hope that compassion prevails and the FDA prohibits this cruel practice. Your views on this issue are requested.

Yours truly,


JoAnne Walker

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